Ambleside
August 24/63

W. L. Garrison

My dear friend

I am sure we shall agree that, in the present state of feeling existing in your country against England, it is desirable that no mistakes in matters of fact should be permitted to aggravate any existing prejudices. You will therefore not object, I am confident, to my pointing out to you an extraordinary misstatement in the Liberator of Augt 8th which cannot but mislead those of your readers who do not know better about the whole theory & spirit of the political institutions of England. It is for you to judge how to set the matter right.

In the article on Mr Bright's reply to Mr Roebuck, (first page) the writer

Says

"Mr. John Bright, emphatically one of the people, is the most effective of English Parliamentary speakers; but, because he has sprung from the industrial classes, he has not the most remote chance of being invited, even should his liberal principles triumph, to form part of any Administration in England."

Is the writer really unaware that Mr. Cobden, Mr. Bright's twin brother in politics, a precisely his equal in station, has been invited & urged to take a seat in the Cabinet? Does the writer not know that the Peels were cotton-spinners & Canning's mother an actress, & Lord Chancellor Eldon's father a humble coal-seller? If these should be supposed outre-the-way cases, what does the writer think of our present government, in which there are at this moment six members at least of an origin as level with Mr. Bright's as can well be? There are Mr. Gladstone, Mr. T. Milner Gibson, the Lord Chancellor, Mr. Cardwell, Sir R. Peel (going back to his grandfather), Mr. Sutt, & Mr. Stansfeld.

It is the very characteristic of our polity that it leaves the political

career open to desert; & every successive Administration contains a proof that birth has nothing whatever to do with qualification for office. - Neither have sectarian considerations, in Mr Bright's case or any other. If he is a Quaker, one member of the present government is a Wesleyan, & another a Unitarian.

Your writer seems to regard Natural power as a main qualification for office. But it is not so. It is a very great convenience; but by no means a requisite. In point of fact, there are only Lord Palmerston & Mr Gladstone & Sir Stansfeld in the government who are remarkable as speakers; & where can a worse be found than Lord Russell?

Is your writer unaware of the censure visited upon Lord Derby for having once publicly said that Mr Bright could never be in the Cabinet? It was considered an unconstitutional

declaration as the administration is constitutionally open to all the citizens. It was not of Mr Bright's birth that Lord Derby was thinking when he said that: but of some better grounds.

The reasons why Mr Bright's political career is a failure, & why he has nothing more to expect, are his disqualifications for statesmanship. Of these the most prominent are his want of political knowledge, & his want of patriotism. His narrowness of mind, his baseless political views, his passionate prejudices, & his habit of reckless statement have prevented his gathering any political force, & will always leave him solitary. His really fine oratory has no effect whatever in counterbalancing such disqualifications; & it is anything but a

matter of regret that it has not.

When your countrymen speak of "the governing classes" of England, it usually comes out that they are thinking of the aristocracy by birth: but this is a serious mistake. It is time that in this country a man cannot step into office unprepared & unproved. It is requisite that a statesman should have a mind cultivated, & a life devoted to the most arduous of human pursuits. In short, statesmanlike qualities are here requisite to statesmanship: but there is no distinction between men who prove themselves fit. A man born in a garret has as much right to the premiership as one born in a mansion; whereas, on the other hand, a seat in the Cabinet has been offered to Mr Cobden, & never will be offered to Mr Bright,

(starting as they did from the same
point, & in the same track) simply
because the one is qualified for
function of governing, & the other
not. I hope this matter is clear
to you, my dear friend, & that you
will make it clear to others. I hope
this, because it is the greatest possible
disadvantage here to every good
American cause when such essential
misapprehensions as the above can
be pointed to for censure, ridicule
or mere surprise."

I am with cordial wishes, & good
hopes for your special cause, your
old friend H. Martineau.